



NEIGHBOURS AND NETWORKS: THE BLOOD TRIBE IN THE SOUTHERN ALBERTA ECONOMY, 1884-1939

by W. Keith Regular

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Dedicated to my mother and father

ELIZABETH (NOFTALL) REGULAR
1930-2005

&

RYBURN BAXTER REGULAR
1927

And to my mother-in-law and father-in-law

ANN 'NANCE' (COOKE) PUMPHREY
1923-1985

&

WILLIAM THOMAS PUMPHREY
1919-2007

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| LIST OF TABLES AND MAPS | xi |
| PREFACE | xiii |
| 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The Literature | |
| Theoretical Considerations | |
| The Locale | |
| People | |
| Structures of Management: The Reserve | |
| Systems of Control: The Reserve | |
| The Rural Community | |
| Fort Macleod | |
| Cardston | |
| Raymond | |
| Conclusion | |
| | |
| 2: 'FREE RANGE OR PRIVATE PROPERTY': INTEGRATING BLOOD RESERVE LAND INTO THE NON-NATIVE ECONOMY | 35 |
| Introduction | |
| Initial Arrangements: The Ranching Era | |
| The Bloods Take Control | |
| Circumstance and Change | |
| Mixed Farming Interlude | |
| The Bloods' Continued Resistance | |
| World War I and Greater Production | |
| The Challenges of Lease | |
| Depression and Drought | |
| Conclusion | |

**3: 'SELLING TO OUTSIDERS': MARKETING
COAL, HAY, AND FREIGHTING SERVICES** 71

Introduction
Market Activities
Coal
Hay
Freighting
The Special efforts of Agent Wilson
The Market Responds
Conclusions

**4: 'ALL THE INDIANS HAVE GONE TO THE BEET':
BLOOD LABOUR IN THE RAYMOND SUGAR
BEET FIELDS** 103

Introduction
The Industry: Local Evolution
The Bloods' Significance
Industry Problems
Retrospective and Conclusions

**5: 'A PROSPECTIVE CITIZEN OF NO MEAN
IMPORTANCE': THE BLOODS AND THE
BUSINESS COMMUNITY** 127

Introduction
The Merchant Environment
Policy and Business
The Business of Debt
Businesses Cry Foul
The Department of Indian Affairs: Explanation and Reaction
Depression
Conclusion

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6: CONCLUSION: CHANGE OVER TIME | 163 |
| NOTES | 177 |
| SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY | 215 |
| Manuscript Sources | |
| Official Reports | |
| Private Holdings | |
| Manuscript Sources | |
| Books, Articles, and Pamphlets | |
| Newspapers | |
| INDEX | 233 |

TABLES

- 1.1. Population at Census Year
- 2.1. Lease Monies Due Bloods
- 5.1. Blood Income from the Sale of Wheat and Oats for 1920–27
- 5.2. Blood Tribe Debt as of April, 1934
- 5.3. Blood Tribe Debt on the Basis of Community Owed
- 5.4. Summary of Blood Tribe Debt by Class
- 5.5. Blood Tribe Debt, 1934–42

MAPS

1. Map of Blood Reserve and Area (Frontispiece)
2. Map of Indian Reserve (Blood) No. 148, Showing Settlement and Use Patterns
3. Map of Indian Reserve (Blood) No. 148, Showing Communications Links

PREFACE

This history focuses on the economic association between the Blood Indians and their neighbours in southern Alberta from the 1880s through the 1930s. Canadian historiography has yet much to detail regarding the economic associations between Natives and non-Natives sharing an environment and experiencing an integrated economic. I posit the argument that the Bloods and their reserve, contrary to general perceptions of Native reserves, have at times played more than a minor role in the regional development of southern Alberta. The Bloods have influenced the economic circumstances in which Natives and newcomers found themselves in the post-treaty period on the Canadian Plains.

The Blood tribe and their large reservation were a significant factor in the southern Alberta region in which they were located. Their land base was important to the nascent and established ranching industry near the reserve during the 1880s through the period of the Great Depression. The products of the Blood reserve, especially coal and hay, were commodities in demand by settlers, and the Bloods were encouraged to provide them as needed. The Bloods became expert freighters and the local community sought them out to transport the much-needed produce from the reserve and to transship goods for non-Native entrepreneurs. Blood field labour in the Raymond area sugar beet fields was at times critical to the functioning of that industry. Their availability and willingness to work was a deciding factor in the operations of the Knight Sugar Company, especially during the first decade of operations. Finally, the Bloods' ties to the merchant community, particularly in Cardston and Fort Macleod, resulted in a significant infusion of money into the local economy. Importantly, much of this cash resulted from the personal wealth of the Bloods and was not a consequence of Department of Indian Affairs charity. The Bloods were not a drain on the local resources but were important contributors to the developing economy of the region. The relationship that the Bloods had with local merchants was very much like that of their White neighbours – interdependent.

Unfortunately the Department of Indian Affairs did not recognize the potential of the reserve to serve the needs of the Bloods, or at least did not let this recognition mitigate their policies of restriction and paternalism. Had they done so the fortunes of the Bloods, and many other Native

reserves, might be now much different. So too might there be greater recognition of the part played by Natives in regional economies.

Scholarly inquiry is not a lonely endeavour and my efforts in this case are no exception. Many individuals and organizations are owed a debt of gratitude for their valuable assistance and contribution to this project. The archivists and staff of the Library and Archives of Canada, Provincial Archives of Alberta, and the Glenbow Archives were very helpful. My friend Douglas Cass at the Glenbow Archives is deserving of special mention. He readily fielded my inquiries, offered advice and did footwork when I was stymied by lack of access to documents and books imposed by my rural setting. Thanks are also due to the helpful and efficient staff at the University of Calgary Press. I owe a special debt of gratitude to two scholars who epitomize the scholarly teacher. Dr. Herman Ganzevoort of the University of Calgary provided constant encouragement and advice from the initial stages of this project. Many thanks are also due to Dr. Joseph Cherwinski, now retired, Memorial University of Newfoundland. It during a teacher and student conversation with Dr. Cherwinski that this project had its genesis. He was encouraging and keen to see its completion. Three anonymous readers gave very helpful suggestions for improving this work. It is my hope that I have at least met some of their expectations. Their suggestions were much appreciated and I am grateful. This work is better for their insights. Clearly, however, sins of omission and commission are strictly my own. Last but not least I wish to thank my wife Anne for her understanding, encouragement, and patience throughout this project. Without such this work could have never been brought to fruition. Thanks also to Ryburn and Nancy, who seemed to have understood that their dad was preoccupied with some historical matter, as is usually the case.

W.K.R.

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